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RESPECT, ENGAGEMENT, RESPONSIBILITY.

BY- HOWE, HAROLD, II

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THIS ADDRESS STRESSES THE URGENCY OF INVOLVING PARENTS, COMMUNITIES, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS IN THE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOLS. THESE GROUPS MUST NOW BE ACTIVELY INCLUDED IN DECISION MAKING AND IN THE CONTROL OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTS. AMONG THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN RELATION TO THE POWER STRUGGLE ARE THE COMPATABILITY OF THE GOALS OF RACIAL INTEGRATION VS. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION, NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS VS. EDUCATIONAL PARKS, LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS VS. LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT DECENTRALIZATION, AND ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARDS OF EDUCATION VS. PARENT AND OTHER GROUPS INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING. TWO GENERALIZATIONS ARE MADE ABOUT THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENTAL LEVELS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION--(1) THE STATES ARE NOT ADEQUATELY SUPPORTING LARGE URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS, AND (2) THERE IS TOO GREAT A TENDENCY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ABROGATE THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITIES TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOLS BY RELYING ON FEDERAL MONIES AND PROGRAMS. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (STATLER-HILTON HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 19, 1968). (NH)

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RESPECT, ENGAGEMENT, RESPONSIBILITY*

An Address by Harold Howe II
U. S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

I saw a headline in the New York Times the other day that said:

POETS ARE UNITED
AGAINST EDITORS

The Times uses a very thin, compressed type, and at first I read that headline as saying:

POETS ARE UNITED
AGAINST EDUCATORS

And for a moment I thought to myself, "Great Scott! Now we've got the poets against us."

So it is nice to be here among such friends of education as the National Committee for Support of the Public Schools.

Nevertheless, I must admit to being a little edgy about coming in as the windup speaker in a three-day session. Is there anything really left to say about "The Struggle for Power in the Public School System?"

Frankly, when the subject of power and the public schools comes up, I tend to react like a punch-drunk fighter and automatically duck.

So let me get my disclaimers out early. Uncle Sam does not want any school power or control. We want citizens such as yourselves to control the schools through participation in the affairs of State and local school districts. We can provide some money, hopefully some ideas, and perhaps a cheering section. But we think

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*Before the Sixth Annual Convention of the National Committee for Support of the Public Schools at the Statler-Hilton Hotel, Washington, D. C., 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 19, 1968

power is best lodged with the people. And in that statement we are squarely on the side of both President Johnson and Barry Goldwater, not to mention Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson.

That issue now being out of the way, let me go on to suggest some personal thoughts about how power should be used in the public school system and what the Federal role should be.

If there is one great truth that is coming through to education now as a result of such reports as that of the Civil Disorders Commission, the Equal Educational Opportunities Survey, the study by Professor Harry Passow of the schools in Washington, D. C., and many, many others, it is this:

The people of the ghetto--the poor and the powerless--are demanding and must have involvement in our schools.

And a second important truth is that parent, community, teacher, and student involvement cannot be achieved without some transfer of power, some award of discretion about how the funds for public education shall be put to use.

It is no longer enough just to tell parents about plans for their children and their neighborhoods. It is no longer enough to set up a student council to act as a transmission belt for administration policies. It no longer works simply to hand the teacher the books and a lesson plan and say, "Go teach."

Marshall McLuhan says it is the electronic age of television, radio, film, telephone, and computers that has created this new sense of involvement, this new demand for being a part of the communications system that leads to decision-making.

Whatever the reason, it is very real. The Equal Educational Opportunities Survey of 650,000 students revealed that one of the variables with a high correlation to achievement was the degree to which the student felt a "sense of control of his environment." In ghetto schools that sense of control is largely missing. The child of poverty, of whatever race, perceives his world as capricious, as a maze of obstacles which defeat him, his peers, and his family at every turn.

And in particular the world of the minority person in the United States today--as the report of the Commission on Civil Disorders bluntly reminded us over and over again--the world of the Negro, Puerto Rican, and Mexican-American, often is cluttered with barriers which school does not seem able to prepare him to surmount.

And so we have the term "Black Power," a term that may be taken as signalling the emergence of that situation which de Tocqueville described as a foundation for revolution:

"A grievance patiently endured so long as it seems beyond redress," he said, "becomes intolerable once the possibility of remedy crosses men's minds."

That observation accurately summarizes the mood in many of our inner cities today, a mood which educators, government, and the general public must recognize and deal with. But they must deal with it in ways which demonstrate an understanding that the origins of the mood lie in part in their own acts of discrimination, in their own failure to act, in their own suggestions of remedies imposed without consulting those who suffer. Indeed, the only way this mood can be turned to

constructive ends in many places is by giving its participants the responsibility of power.

Transferring power, even in small amounts, is no easy task in a complex society such as ours, but it can be done. Business and labor have found orderly ways to do so. Teachers and school boards are getting together, albeit with many abrasions. Many other new forms of economic and political power transactions are being developed in our society. If the elements of such transactions often are diverse and complex, they share at least one common variable to which all parties must subscribe. That is responsibility. For responsibility is the ultimate test of any form of citizenship, involvement, or participation.

In its report recommending decentralization of New York City's school system, the committee appointed by Mayor Lindsay and chaired by McGeorge Bundy made the case in the following words:

> We believe that...the schools of New York have been dangerously separated from many of New York's communities. We do not think that the pupils in such schools can be aroused and led upward--or even kept in good order--if their parents are not offered the reality of responsible participation.
>
> It is of no use to say that others in the past have accepted a distant discipline and learned well from accepting unfamiliar authority. The proposition is open to doubt, on its own merits, and it simply does not apply at all to the state of mind in the urban ghetto today. The liberating force for the urban education of the Negro and the Puerto Rican must be a new respect, a new engagement, a new responsibility.

"A new respect, a new engagement, a new responsibility." Those words and ideas, earnestly and honestly applied, are the beginnings for

any new power arrangements, and I commend them to you for your thoughtful appraisal. They are powerful words, and sobering.

As I think about their implications for the schools I am reminded of the Duke of Wellington's statement about troops sent to Spain.

"I don't know what effect these men will have on the enemy," he said, "but, by God, they terrify me."

Now I really don't want those words to terrify us, but let's run a little scared in this situation. Some humility is called for in discussing educational problems these days. I can tell you I have accumulated my share in the 26 months I have occupied the fourth floor corner office at 400 Maryland Avenue, Southwest.

We will need humility, wisdom, good will, and intelligence to meet the challenges that face us in reshaping our cities, our society, and our schools if we are to meet the test of survival laid down for us by the Civil Disorders Commission in its warning that this Nation is moving toward two societies--"one black, one white--separate and unequal."

Within the framework of your discussion of the power struggle in the public school system, let me then suggest to you some of the issues we must come to grips with in resolving the power equations in education. I would list five of them:

--The question of the compatibility of racial integration as a major objective of the schools on one hand and efforts to compensate for educational deprivation on the other.

--The issues which emerge between the neighborhood school and educational parks or other new forms of physical arrangements for education.

--The challenges presented to the power and responsibility of local school boards by the suggestion that the largest school districts in the cities decentralize.

--The problems presented to administrators and boards of education by the demands for teacher, student, parent, and community involvement in the planning and decision making processes of the schools.

--And, finally, the new and complex relationships of local, State, and Federal government created both by the new Federal role in education and by the new imperatives that all three levels of government work together to attack massive and unfamiliar difficulties.

You will recognize immediately that these are not precise and independent little capsule concepts, each of which can be disposed of separately in a series of well-ordered and systematic steps. The nature of the educational power game involves a resolution of forces--social, economic, and political, cutting across all levels of society and government. I defy anyone to put this mix into a computer and come up with a "solution." With that reservation in mind, I would like to set forth one man's views of these fundamental issues.

First, compensatory education and integration. The debate still rages on. We are told by some that compensatory education is not working and that we must therefore reject it in favor of massive efforts at integration. We are told by others that integration is an impractical goal and that the only way to improve education in the central city is to make massive expenditures for the schools there without regard to desegregation.

The Office of Education does not accept either proposition. We look at compensatory education and integration not as mutually exclusive enterprises but rather as parallel goals, both to be pursued at the same time. There is another issue which complicates the debate about compensatory education and instruction. It is the new movement for black separatism, for the isolation and the control of the schools by the minority groups themselves. On this issue we believe that minority groups need a stronger voice then they have in the schools which serve them but that they also need the power of the white majority working on their behalf and that the separatism they are advocating is self-defeating.

Our evaluation of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act--and we are in the final stages of an important new report on this billion-dollar compensatory education program--is that it is making a vital contribution to American education; that without it, thousands of schools would be in deeper trouble than they are; and that more and more schools are learning how to use the funds it provides to good effect. We are quite willing to concede

that there has been no wholesale breakthrough in the problems of the ghetto schools, but we think it naive to expect any such development in two years time.

Our support of compensatory education is based on the bitter but hard reality that the compaction of poverty and racial isolation in many of our cities is massive and growing and that there are no patented solutions to correct that situation in the immediate future. Note that I said the condition applied to "many" cities. In many other cities--especially small and medium-sized cities--integration is possible now and must be pursued. Scores of localities are doing so. But even in these places where integration is feasible now, the need for compensatory education still exists. The need is especially critical for those children who already are two or three grades behind in reading, mathematics, and verbal skills. Without special help, these children just cannot be expected to compete or to catch up. They need the kind of remedial attention, summer classes and other services--health, nutritional, psychological, and cultural--provided under Title I.

Let us not polarize the debate on compensatory education and desegregation. Both are needed. I cannot state too strongly my agreement with the findings of the Civil Disorders Commission that our society is endangered by the growing separatism of the races. The schools must assume their share of responsibility for helping to heal the wounds we suffer from this division. At the same time, it should be fully understood that in our large cities, more

leverage than the schools alone can provide will be needed if we are to reach any ultimate solutions to the segregation which exists. Employers, housing authorities, city planners, public and private agencies of all kinds will have to work together and with the schools. State government must take a new and more vigorous role, as it has done in such States as Massachusetts and New York.

The second issue I cited concerns the neighborhood school and educational parks or other novel physical forms of the school. Here again, I see no mutual exclusion in these concepts. And I see a great deal of overlap with other things we are discussing. Desegregation, decentralization, parent and community involvement, and other factors are part of this dialogue.

Let me say that I see nothing sacred about the neighborhood school and no millenium in educational parks. What makes things work in education, as in other endeavors, is local agreement and planning by local people, plus determination to meet a need.

If "neighborhood school" means continued racial isolation, it is suspect. If it is a "black power" put-down of whitey, it is also suspect. But if it manages to draw educational strength from its neighborhood while offering children the chance to reach beyond whatever limitations the neighborhood imposes on their education, it deserves support. That combination should be the test of any school.

Educational parks have not been tested yet, but the plans I have looked at--for Pittsburgh and for East Orange, New Jersey as well as for parts of New York City--seem to be soundly based and should provide exciting new models for education. They appear to

offer an opportunity for desegregating our schools while at the same time providing high quality education, but an educational park which was nothing but an enlarged version of the school we have always known would be a waste of money even if it produced some desegregation.

The third item on this difficult agenda is decentralization and the problems it poses for local school boards.

At the request of New York's Commissioner of Education I went to New York City last month to testify before a State Senate committee examining the plan to decentralize New York City schools and to establish some form of local school board with specific powers for at least partial local administration of schools.

As the record of my testimony shows, I endorse the concept of decentralization of our big city school systems. Referring to the failure of urban school systems to resolve problems that seemed immune to the piecemeal special approaches heretofore attempted, I made the following observation:

> One of these fundamental problems--perhaps the most important--is the failure of previous efforts to generate a sense of responsibility for education outside the school. Without really thinking about the matter a great deal, we assumed that whatever needed to be done could be done in the classroom. If this notion ever had validity, it has it no longer, and we must fully and freely admit this fact. We must realize that education cannot be relevant and effective unless the schools develop a relationship of mutual support and cooperation with the communities they serve. A large and important part of a youngster's education takes place outside the classroom. Unless the schools can affect this informal part of the child's education and relate to it, his formal education will have little meaning.

While the New York City approach is unique, the principle is not, and other cities also are engaged in different forms of decentralization,

regionalization, or dispersion of administration. It seems to me, however, that whatever the form decentralization takes, the effect of it must be to provide citizens who feel fenced out and discriminated against with new elements of direct control over their schools. That is the key ingredient. Without it, decentralization has no real meaning.

I would take issue with those who argue that decentralization of schools is a trap to shift responsibility for the conduct of education onto the shoulders of people who lack power, know-how, and money. It is, instead, an effort to give them a chance to learn the responsible use of power, and to build an access for them to the power exercised for the whole city by the City Board of Education.

You cannot have it both ways: those who demand improvement must be willing to participate in its achievement. There is a role for criticism, but that role must exist within the framework of responsibility and accountability. The alternative is anarchy. Decentralization of control of education in our large cities does not mean handing over money and personnel selection to groups of self-appointed saviors of education who seek their own aggrandizement more directly than they seek new opportunities for young people. Instead, it means making democracy work in an orderly fashion among those who have never had the chance for participation in the affairs of the schools which serve their children.

Properly devised systems of decentralization with this objective can make the role of the overall city Board of Education more

significant by giving it the chance to reach for major policy issues while avoiding the day-to-day crises involved in running the schools.

Fourth on the agenda I set forth earlier, we come to the involvement of teachers, students, parents, and community in the schools. Again, it would seem apparent that a conversation about this subject might easily overlap with such matters as decentralization or neighborhood schools.

There is, nevertheless, good reason to try to separate out the notion of involvement in the educational process on the part of those engaged in it. For no matter what other functions, forms, or administrative structures are invoked, a successful educational program must have the involvement of those individuals directly affected by it, in informal as well as formal ways.

I submit to you that such informal involvement of teachers, students, parents, and community rarely occurs in those schools which need it most, and I refer particularly to the schools in the inner city--schools which are too often regarded by teachers as places to escape from, by parents as places which fence them out and diminish their children through failure, and by students as enemy rather than a friend. The bars on the windows and the wire mesh fence around the school symbolize its posture in the community.

What does involvement mean? It means jobs for parents as teacher aides. It means schools which are open evenings, weekends, and summers, and available to adults as well as children. It means frank and frequent talk among teachers, principals, and parents.

It means local employers lending a hand with work-study opportunities, job counseling, big brother and big sister relationships, and teaching help. It means student governments that govern from a base of responsibility and participation. It means literally and figuratively that the fence must come down. The informal participation in the life of the school is an important power relationship of citizens to their schools in suburbia. We need an analogous effort in the cities.

The invisible walls of misunderstanding and apathy have too long separated the schools from the constituents. The job of tearing down those walls is not easy, but it can be done. Schools must take the first step, offer the first hand, open the first door.

The final item on my list today is the question of local, State, and Federal involvement in education. Simply stated this relationship has consisted of local control, State responsibility, and Federal concern. That is a neat and tidy package, and though it has suffered plenty of bumps and bruises during the past few years, it is still a good guideline for both discussion and action.

It seems to me, though, in the light of the ominous tone of the report of the Civil Disorders Commission and the report recently issued by the National Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations that we must take a hard look at what is behind the local-State-Federal relationship and ask ourselves the question: is it still working?

The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations--composed of a distinguished panel of U.S. Senators and Congressmen, Governors, Mayors, and State and county officials--is not sanguine.

In its report, issued two months before the Civil Disorders Commission's findings, it warns that our system of government "is on trial today as never before in this century of crisis and change."

Referring to "seething racial unrest and civil disorders, burgeoning crime and delinquency, alarming differences in individual opportunity for education, housing and employment," the report concludes:

> The manner of meeting these challenges will largely determine the fate of the American political system: it will determine if we can maintain a form of government marked by partnership and wholesome competition among national, State and local levels, or if instead--in the face of threatened anarchy--we must sacrifice political diversity as the price of the authoritative action required for the Nation's survival.

Those are hard words. Are they related to the governmental realities of education? Let me point out to you that the governor's commission investigating the riot in Newark recommended that the State of New Jersey take over the city's entire educational system. I refer you to the suit by the city of Detroit against the State of Michigan demanding a greater share of State aid to education. I point to the actions of teacher groups in several States. And I ask you to look soberly at the sometimes tumultuous relationships of parents and students with the schools.

Lacking time to discuss all these intergovernmental relationships in depth, I have to resort to two broad generalizations about them:

1. The States are not doing the job they should in education for our large cities. They are shortchanging the cities in the allocation of State funds and

creating a situation in which the cities seek aid directly from Washington. If our Federal system is to survive in education as well as in other areas, there is a need for new levels of commitment by State governments in the interest of urban centers--and, I hasten to add, there is equal need for new commitments from the Federal government.

2. Although the vigorous, new Federal role in education offers added hope for the solution of our hardest problems, it does so only if States and local school boards remain equally vigorous. There is reason to fear that the local and State taxpayers, encouraged by stories of multibillion-dollar Federal programs, may relax and say, "Let Uncle Sam do it", as they vote "no" on local tax levies and bond issues. The net effect will be to destroy any advantage that Federal participation in education might bring to children in the schools.

There are no easy responses to these challenges or to the many others you have raised here and discussed in the last two-and-a-half days. The concepts and problems are complex and involved, often deeply entangled in emotions. They have withstood solution for some time, but I for one am by no means ready to throw in the towel for the public school system. I would like to close by suggesting that

citizens like you have a most significant role in helping education meet its present crisis.

These remarks of mine today were prepared while flying across the United States to deliver another set of remarks in Portland, Oregon. One of the perspectives you can achieve from 35,000 feet is the feeling that there are very extensive areas of the country where few of the dramatic problems besetting our cities are evident. I am told by responsible observers that the people who live in those areas are not as certain as the Commission on Civil Disorders about the crisis nature of the domestic problems this country faces. To many of them the city ghettoes seem far away, and many more quite naturally raise the question of why they should feel responsible or get involved.

You can do something about this mood of domestic isolationism which pervades large segments of America. President Johnson has before the Congress programs which will help to attack some of the difficult problems you have discussed at this meeting. He has also a tax proposal to help pay for those programs. But the programs and tax proposals alike are endangered by those who think the Nation can survive while ignoring the cancer of poverty, ignorance, and despair which is the lot of one-sixth of its people. You can help more of our citizens to understand the significance of the warning signs. If some people have alternative proposals, by all means let them come forward. But let's not sell America short in the name of false economy.

Our willingness to support a system of free public education has been an essential element in the development of this enormously powerful and wealthy Nation. I am confident that we will rise to the current challenge, for the liberating force is that "new respect, new engagement, and new responsibility" of which I spoke earlier.

We cannot achieve this respect, engagement, and responsibility without a commitment for a new and higher citizenship by educators, students, parents, and the community served by our schools.

In his education message to the Congress last month President Johnson referred to that commitment as "the fifth freedom--freedom from ignorance."

> It means (he said) that every man, everywhere, should be free to develop his talents to their full potential--unhampered by arbitrary barriers of race or birth or income.
>
> We have already begun the work of guaranteeing that fifth freedom. The job, of course, will never be finished. For a Nation, as for an individual, education is a perpetually unfinished journey, a continuing process of discovery.

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